

April 28, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

In 1994 I was a victim of the War on Drugs. Soon, it seems the state of Rhode Island will engage in the same process that I did to have much of my life ruined. Except they will be the 'big dealers' or 'fish' that the state was so desperately trying to find during the raid that netted 36 adults early one morning in November... Of those 36, one person had 11 pounds...small potatoes compared to what a recreational store will sell in a weekend. I was arrested for selling 7g (\$80 - \$100 over the border in MA currently) and conspiring to deliver a controlled substance, 2 Felony charges that resulted in a 5-year suspended sentence, 150 of community service and fines.

I spent 5 years doing the best I could to keep jobs that 2 felonies would allow. I could not use my recent degree from URI for the Federal job I had worked hard to prepare for. I could not leave the state, so my band ended that income dried up, as did relationships... Being labelled a drug dealer has a great deal of weight, my neighbors of years looked at me differently immediately after. I have lost relationships with family members because of the situation.

As you may or not know, the war on drugs resulted in convictions...these were important as the more convictions for drugs, the more federal monies were levied in that direction. With 3 felony convictions came Life in Prison. If a person had decided to be horrible, if I made a mistake driving, I could be in jail for life for what the State of Rhode Island will soon be making money doing. In fact, the first personnel in the state that benefited from the legalization of medical marijuana was a former police officer. I would say that is highly hypocritical.

My grandfather got the Bronze Star for a mistake in World War 2, he ran through enemy fire a few times to direct mortars onto a Nazi armored division. He said it was the stupidest thing he'd ever done. I know about doing the 'stupidest thing I have ever done', I made a mistake I paid dearly for and still pay for to this day, 27 years later. Having police and politicians benefit from legalization of recreational marijuana is like letting Nazis oversee the Kosher Foods of the World. The War on Drugs was a mistake for demonizing the people involved with and using Cannabis for whatever they decided it helped with. Why give the Bronze Star to the wrong folks? The people hurt by the War on Drugs in Rhode Island deserve: a seat at the table and in the business planning, full expungement of charges related to Cannabis convictions as well removal of arrest records, consideration of equity of licensing to those affected by the Cannabis convictions as well assistance to communities hit especially hard by the War on Drugs in Rhode Island.

I have been able to expunge my record and move into a better trajectory immediately, expungement matters. I was unable to have a job to put on a resume for 3 years after the event. I was able to go back to school, get my Master's and become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. I have been trying desperately to regain the 15 years lost of earning potential and missed jobs because of background checks.

Additionally, I would like to assist the families of Rhode Island and further, the world by using my expertise to assist individuals with autism, an affliction covered by medical cannabis. Currently the climate makes doing so difficult. Groundbreaking research could be done here, and time is wasting...don't give the Bronze Star to the wrong people.

I am reachable at 401-651-6556, kurt.carlson33@gmail.com and have signed up to testify as warranted 4.29.2021. I am happy to be part of the process and assist the steps for all of us to benefit by the next steps the state takes.

Sincerely,

-Kurt

Kurt Erik Carlson

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